

RECKLESS RALPH'S

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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OLD NICK CARTERS

by Joe Gantner.

Oh what a pleasant thrill it was in our boyhood days to see the wonderful collection of brilliant colored, dare-devil daring covers of those old 5c weeklies, that appeared every Friday on the newsstands. There were Tip-Tops, Buffalo Bills, Diamond Dicks, Nick Carters, Brave and Bold, Pluck and Luck, Liberty Boys of 76, Work and Win, Young Klondike, and many more too numerous to mention. These were called the Blood and Thunder literature of yesteryear, that the modern pulp magazines are now replac-



ing. My favorite through all these years is good old Nick Carter who helped me while away many an imaginative hour of youth. What freedom and leisure a young boy has, and how bright the future looks. We actually believed in those days that there was really a detective living in New York City, by the name of Nick Carter who did all the stunts pictured, and when we in truth found out that there was no Nick Carter, we were more disappointed than when we found out there was no Santa Claus.

In those colorful days of our past, we were so interested in the 5c weeklies that we would wait three and four hours at the newsstands for the



constantly asking myself. I thought that maybe my sister saved some, but no, she had none. An old colored woman thought she might have some in an old trunk, but she was too aged to go down in the cellar to look. On and on my search went. I asked everybody that I knew that had read these novels, and the same answer was that not a one could be found. The thought then struck me, why not write to the Library of Congress at Washington, D. C. and maybe they will send several volumes of the old weeklies. I had borrowed several volumes on photography at one time from this Library, and our Government will always gladly help us if we ask them too. They wrote to me a very courteous letter telling me that on account of the poor quality of paper these old Nick Carters were printed on that it would be impossible to send them to me, and they suggested that I write to the three names they sent me, and that I could still buy these Old Nick Carters. Among these names was Ralph Cummings of Fisherville, Mass., who proved to be a great help in finding Nick Carters.

It was a surprise to me to find that other men had collected and enjoyed the things I was interested in. I found that Ralph Cummings published a little magazine on old weeklies, called the Dime Novel Round-Up, and it is the most interesting monthly I have read in a long time. It is full of information about the old time novels and novelists. It is also well filled with ads showing where one may get these old dime thrillers. If there is a craving for these out of date book friends of our boyhood, you can't make a better investment than to subscribe to the Round-Up. It only costs \$1.00 per year, and I know you will read it from cover to cover as I do every month.

It was through the help of Ralph Cummings that I was enabled to get just the Nick Carters that I wanted. I was interested in the Nick Carters that were published about the year 1900, as this was the period I started to read them. I remembered that the number of these Old Nick Carters were around No. 300, and I wanted to see if my ideal friend Nick Carter looked as good to me as he did when I was a boy. I ordered four Nick Carters from Ralph Cummings, and you

large Express package full of these yellow back novels to arrive and to be placed upon the racks. I wish I could get as interested in the modern stories as I was in these old nickel libraries. I doubt if the young of today get as much of a thrill out of the Superman Comics that are now flooding the markets as we did? There must have been millions of readers of those old half-dime novels, and I wonder how many people are still living who would again get the heart-felt shock of seeing those old 5c Nick Carters, as I did recently after a long search for them.

It is peculiar how life repeats itself. The things we throw away today we will want tomorrow. We never know when we will want something that has been very interesting in our past life. Great honor should be given to the collector, for it is by his foresight that we can again live the joyous past. When I was a young man I had a stack of Nick Carters and other half-dime weeklies nearly three feet high, and to this day I cannot remember whatever became of these magazines. About five years ago a very strong desire came to me to see again those old Nick Carters that was such a joy in my youth. Never did I regret in my life anything like I did for not saving those old Nick Carters. Where could I see these books, I was

can imagine my joy when I found the original old Nick Carters again staring me back in the face. The numbers were around 380, and my only objection was that they were not far enough back to suit me, and just last fall Ralph sent me some more Nick Carters, and believe me these were just the numbers I was looking for, and I remembered that I had owned at one time similar old Nick Carters, and it was like meeting a teacher you had not seen for forty years, who had helped to mold your life, and make you what you are.

I have only nineteen of the Old Nick Carter Weeklies in my collection, which somehow satisfies my craving to see the great detective in the format that was so pleasing in my boyhood days. I am afraid that collectors won't be able to gather together these highly-colored magazines much longer as the paper is of such poor quality, that they are gradually falling to pieces. Whenever I look at a set of my thrillers, the floor is covered with pieces of the dried paper.

My opinion is that the beautiful colored covers of the Nick Carter Weekly is really what sold the magazine. These covers always had the most dramatic part of the novel in an exact illustration of the text, and you could look at the cover and see what the inside of the book was all about. Nick Carter was always dressed in the up-to-date fashion of that day. If double-breasted coats were in style, Nick had one on. I would like to find out who the artists were of these Weeklies, as I believe they deserve more credit for selling such a large quantity of magazines, than the writers themselves. I think that if Street and Smith, the publishers, ever intend to put the Nick Carter Magazine on the market, they had better follow the format of the Nick Carter Weekly from the year 1900 to about 1906 or thereabouts. I frankly believe that the Nick Carter Weekly lost its interest to me and others when S & S began to use the single action picture of the modern pulp magazines. As recently as 1935 Street and Smith brought back the Nick Carter Magazine in the shape of the standard pulp magazines on the market, but it must have proven a failure for it is not published today. When the Weeklies cut off

their old illustrations and shape, and Circuses cut off their parades they are both bound to fail.

We wondered as a boy who the real author of Nick Carter was. Most of the novels were signed by Nick Carter, or by the Author of Nick Carter. It was only after the Weekly was discontinued around about the time of World War No. 1 that we Nick Carter Fans began to hear of the writers of the Old Nick Carters. It is conceded that John R. Coryell was the originator of Nick Carter, and Frederick van Renssalaer Dey was the best writer of these Nick Carters, and although there were many authors of Nick Carter, it is admitted that after Dey started to write them in about 1903 the quality was greatly improved. Frankly though I like the Nick Carter Weekly that was published from 1900 to 1904, somehow Nick seemed more human then, and I enjoyed the colored covers where, Nick, Chick, Patsy and Ida Jones girl detective's lives were always in extreme danger, or they were doing such dare-devil acts that you wanted to read the book to see how they were going to be saved.

From about the year 1900 to the first World War, Nick Carter and Sherlock Holmes were the most popular detective heroes of fiction, and while Sherlock Holmes had a more analytical mind, Nick Carter was the grand master of bravery and strength. There was nothing that Nick was afraid of, and his histories often referred to him the nick-name of the "Little Giant." No wonder the kids used to slip behind the barn to read these weeklies, because the parents of those days thought that Dime Novels would ruin their boys, but it has since proven that these Blood-and-Thunder magazines were the best of character builders, and not to be compared with the sexy literature of modern days.

It is very interesting to understand the development of Nick Carter. After three serial stories written by John R. Coryell in the 70's, and published in a story paper, proved to be a hit, the Nick Carter Library (as illustrated) was launched, and after running over a hundred numbers, was discontinued. No. 1 of this Library was called; "Nick Carter, Detective, The Solution of a Remarkable Case." By

a Celebrated Author. The covers of this Library were printed in Black and White, and the stories were written by various authors, and some of them were good, and others not so good.

In 1897 the Nick Carter Weekly (as illustrated) followed the Library, and introduced the brilliant colored covers that we knew so well in our boyhood days. It must have been quite a novelty to those first readers of Nick Carter to see their favorite detective almost true to life. Every other story in the Old Nick Carter Weekly was about Nick, and the alternate story told the adventure of Trim Carter, Chick's son. No. 1 was entitled "The Great Gold Mine Case; or, How Chick's Son Became a Detective." The Trim stories were soon discontinued, and Trim was never heard of anymore. Nick also had a detective school in these early numbers, but the Weekly finally developed about the original Carter characters which became so famous.

The Nick Carter Weekly, again made a change in about the beginning of 1904, this was when Dey took over the writing of them, and it was called "The New Nick Carter Weekly" (as illustrated). No. 372 was the first No. of this series, and was called; "Dazaar, the Arch-Fiend; or, The House of the Seven Devils." Nick Carter Weekly made other changes, but I still think the old Weeklies about 1901 were the best.

LETTER SENT TO GEORGE FRENCH

Jan. 10th, 1938

from Laurana Sheldon Ferris

Dear Mr. French:

Yours of January 7th at hand. At present my home is closed and we are living in the News office building in the village. On account I can not look over the novels, as the house is too cold for me to go there.

I am working ten or twelve hours a day with such high blood pressure that I am forced to take as little exercise as possible. I am in my 76th year, which will explain my need of caution if I wish to stay alive.

Frankly, I don't care what anyone thinks about my work. I wrote the stories I told you I wrote—and received pay for writing them. If Frank

and Sinclair Tousey or Ormonde and George Smith were alive you could soon get the details that you ask for. They are dead, and so is George Bunce, who was manager at Street and Smiths and knew my work.

About three years ago, I wrote to Street & Smith and asked if they had another set of "My Queen," as mine is damaged. Some one answered—I can't recall his name, who said he remembered me very well. They had no extra set of "My Queen." You may be able to find him by going to their place on 7th Ave., New York.

I wrote only a few Jesse James stories, they were original—not re-writes. I wrote one Old King Brady story. Think you saw all these. I wrote several Buffalo Bill stories. The last time I saw Mr. Cody (Buffalo Bill) he told me very smilingly that I had "ruined his reputation."

Mr. Tousey always told me not to tell that I wrote the stories, as no boy would read a story that he thought was written by a woman. However, there were plenty of people who knew my work. Ernest Jarrols (Mickey Finn) was writing for Tousey at the time I was. He may be dead now. I rewrote a lot of Bertha M. Clay (stock name) stories, also some of Mrs. Georgie Sheldon's. She was Mrs. Douns. I also rewrote some English stories for Street & Smith. My own stories were largely written under stock names. Occasionally they put on the name of a prominent actress or actor. I never wrote a Beadle Novel. The name of Marshall P. Wilder was on a magazine story, one of Tousey's. I congratulated him on the story after it was published and the look of bewilderment on his face was funnier than any of his public grimaces.

Some one made the statement in the N. Y. Times a few years ago that no woman wrote on the "Old King Brady series." I answered it. Asked them to find out to whom the check for that certain story was paid to, I have forgotten the number now.

Of course you realize that these yarns were merely pot boilers. I was writing for high-class magazines all the time and did not wish my name used on trash. I wrote a few stories under my maiden name, which was my pen name for many years. Laurana Sheldon, and I also wrote, and

compiled, under the name of Grace Shirley. I took no thought of the future as far as these stories were concerned, and I haven't much conceit in the matter. Ridpaths History of Universal Literature gives me two pages—which is the sort of write-up I like. I have written so much good stuff that I really do not care much about being advertised for the poor stuff.

In re-Laurana Sheldon—writer.

Born at Hadlyme, Conn., April 11th, 1862.

Began writing as a child. Began receiving pay for my work while I was 21 years old. Wrote around 1500 pieces of poetry that were published and paid for. Mostly in newspapers and magazines. Wrote five novels under my own name, and three compilations. Wrote stories of all sorts and kinds, short, long and serial. Married when I was forty-one to Isaac Ferris son of Richard B. Ferris of the Bank of New York and grandson and namesake of the late Chancellor Isaac Ferris of the New York University. No children. Came to Old Orchard Beach, Maine, from New York about twenty-six years ago. Am editing my husband's two weeklies. The Old Orchard News and The Saco News. Both about 24 years old. Have delivered many public addresses, especially political, also lectures on various subjects. Student for 2 years at woman's medical college, New York. Have not had a picture taken for many years. Never did have many. Not sufficiently interested in my own work to make much effort to popularize it at any time. Just like to write.

Mr. Ferris was trial Justice here at the Beach for seven years. He has also written stories, also special articles for magazines. He is seventy-three years old. Was born in New York City. May add here that I probably would never have written on any of those Wild West and detective stories if the regular writer had not gone on sprees. Now and then I was called on to supply a story or so, so the series would not lapse.

Periodicals in which one or more of Laurana Sheldon's writings have appeared. Magazines such as N. Y. Magazine, Godey's, Lippincotts, Cosmopolitan, Metropolitan, Smart Set, Browning, Frank Leslie's, National,

Penny Mag. Free Thought Mag., Boston Transcript, Medical Review of Reviews, Critic and Guide, Watchman, Beacon, Chicago Mag., Ainsley, Overland, Morrison's, Koch, New Age, The Widow, Home, Young's, Housekeeper, Canadian, Commercial Traveler, Progress, Peoples Home Journal, B. B. Mag., Pearson's, Green Bag, Peterson's, Yellow Kid, Poker Chips, Everybody's, Success, Uncle Remus, Hampton, Cavalier, Housewife, Broadway, Snappy Stories, Breezy Stories, Pictorial Weekly, Yellow Book.

Newspapers: Herald, Sun, Evening Sun, N. Y. World, N. Y. Journal, N. Y. American, Press, S. Reporter, the Springfield Republican, Police Gazette, Daily Graphic, N. Y. Mercury, N. Y. Times, Cleveland Leader, St. Croix Courier, N. Y. Telegram, Brooklyn Eagle, Tribune, Eve. Post, O. O. News, Saco News.

Other Periodicals: Judge, Town Topics, Brooklyn Life, Puck, Life, Pleasant Hours, Home and Country, Tousey Publications, Street & Smith Publications, Twinkles, To Date, Truth and others.

NEWSY NEWS

by Ralph F. Cummings

I heard from an old timer that used to buy the Novel Hunters Year Books from me in 1931. W. E. Bates, P. O. Box 464, Walldwick County, N. J. Am trying to get him to join up with the fold, but don't know how I'll make out. He is interested in novels.

Was up to the city (Worcester, Mass.) the other day and went into one of the cheap movie houses (15c) and saw two corks. They were—"Bad Men of Missouri," featuring the three Younger Brothers, at the close of the Civil War when they were with Quantrell's Guerrillas and how they joined up with the James Boys, and their surrender and life imprisonment after the Northfield raid in Minnesota. Sure a very fine and exciting picture. Shows the Dalton boys when they were very young, too. (Of course lots of the picture had been cut out, on account of our Massachusetts laws). The other picture was "Gentleman Jim." That was the early life of James J. Corbett, the California heavy weight champion fighter of the world, also his many battles, and last of all, his great fight with John L. Sullivan. I enjoyed both of them immensely,

and I know you folks would if you saw them. The day I saw these pictures it was raining very hard and very cold and raw, too.

So far, I'm feeling lots better than I did. Guess I'll come around all O.K., hope so, anyway, and also hope all our sick brothers get well very quickly, too.

We hear that George French is liable to have an operation on a prostate gland. Doesn't sound so good, but we all hope that everything comes around all O. K. and that he won't have to go through with it. Here's wishing you luck.

Talk about operations, Brother Jonas knows all about them, and has had more than his share, and still he's hopin' no one else has to go under them, and we hope he never has another.

George H. Cordier is having plenty of sickness too. He's the author of all the fine long articles from California.

Echoes and Rumors editor is working from early morning to late at night, so I'm afraid he won't be able to send us any more laughs for a while to come, but let's hope he'll make up for it, when he does.

George French still has some of the Hahn stuff left to sell, so write him your wants, that's if he is still at home.

Some of the brotherhood boys wonder why ye editor is so far behind in answering some of their letters. He means well, and will write them as soon as he can. Also, if at any time some of you have to pay an extra 3c postage due on a letter, don't get peeved as it's liable to happen to anyone. Many's the letter I get that I have to pay a 3c postage due on. We all, I know, try to get enough postage on our letters, but sometimes in a hurry, they are over-looked.

One of our members was up in an old attic up in Maine a few years ago, inspecting a fine set of Old Cap Collier Library that had a nice big rat-hole down through the center of the whole lot. The owner nearly had heart-failure, who wouldn't?

WANTS—In original binding, Harpers Young People, Golden Days, Tom-seys Arm Chair, Boys Own by Richards of Boston, Fred T. Singleton, 2000-B. S. W. Red Road, Coral Gables, Florida.

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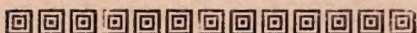
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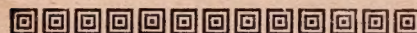
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